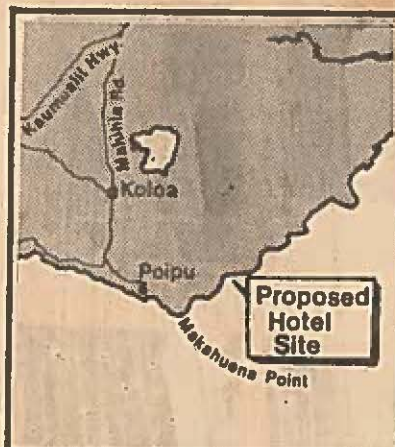


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High praise greets hotel proposal



By Jan TenBruggencate
Advertiser Kauai Bureau

LIHUE — Developer Mel Ventura's proposed luxury hotel at Poipu got nothing but kind words and firm support at a Kauai County Council hearing yesterday.

Supporters used all the mom and apple pie terminology of planning struggles in Hawaii: It's a classy project; it will create lots of builder jobs and then permanent hotel jobs; it will bring needed business to area merchants; it won't detract from existing resorts, since it is keyed to a different class of visitor; and public access to the shore will be vastly improved.

Ventura said he's still not sure how many units the hotel will have. It could be anywhere from 300 to 550, depending on which of four resort operators he selects.

The 30 acres lie along Keoni-loa or Shipwreck Beach, at the eastern end of the Poipu resort

area. The area already is zoned for condominium use, but Ventura said consultants advised him that a hotel will make better use of the site.

Councilwoman JoAnn Yuki-mura said the beach fronting the hotel can be treacherous for swimming. Ventura said that should not be a problem, since the swimming lagoons on the property are designed to be the center of activity.

Ventura said he envisions rooms renting for \$150 and

more nightly. He said the hotel would have a quality on par with the Kahala Hilton and Halekulani hotels on Oahu. Development costs depend largely on the number of rooms to be built, but could near \$100 million, he estimated.

Ventura's supporters at the council hearing included the local contractors' association, the Carpenters Union, Kauai chapter of the Hawaii Visitors Bureau, Kauai Economic Development Board and others.